

REED 'EM

York take slender lead into

THAT'S THE WAY: York's Jamie Reed celebrates after putting the Minstermen ahead from the spot

By Stuart Hammonds

YORK boss Gary Mills insisted he was still smiling his way towards Wembley, despite a frustrating afternoon against a Luton side reduced to nine men.

The Minstermen won 1-0, courtesy of Jamie Reed's 14th-minute penalty after the Hatters went down to ten men with Jake Howells sent off for deliberate handball on the goal line.

Defeat by such a narrow margin felt like victory for Luton once Keith Keane had also been dismissed for two yellow cards in quick succession with 35 minutes, plus five in time added on, still to play.

Mills' side spent most of that period camped in the visitors' half, but could not unlock a defence that was marshalled superbly by Town skipper George Pilkington and Janos Kovacs, with goalkeeper Mark Tyler proving why many rate him Non-League's finest.

It puts next week's return at Keelworth Road up on a knife edge, with the tie poised exactly as it was before the controversial play-off semi-final, second leg two years ago that York also won.

"I'm delighted we're in the lead going to Luton and I'm delighted with the effort and desire of my players," said Mills.

"We started the game superbly and put them on the back foot. We got the penalty purely because of a good quality corner, flick on and finish that would have been a goal anyway."

"People might be frustrated, but I can't believe I've heard a few boos around the ground today. That's got my back up."

"Don't get me wrong; when they go down to ten and then nine men, our quality in the final third to open them up and get the second wasn't there. So yes, that is disappointing."

"But it's the semi-final of a cup, first leg and we've got a one-nil lead. I'm happy with that and I'm smiling, even if a lot of people aren't."

Also happy at the end was Luton boss Gary Brabin, even if his words about referee Paul Tierney were laced in irony, rather than joviality.

Howells had to go for instinctively sticking out his left arm to keep out Reed's far post volley. It was a save Tyler would have been proud of – but even he couldn't repeat his pal's feat,

AND WEEP

second leg against battling Luton

Reed sending the ex-Peterborough keeper the wrong way from 12 yards.

Brabin felt City striker Moses Adebisi, his one-time transfer target, might have already gone for a second-minute challenge on Charlie Henry that earned just a yellow.

Tierney also failed to book City left-back Jamal Tyfield for blatantly kicking the ball away after the whistle had gone for a free-kick foul on Adam Watkins, then sent Keane off for two fouls in quick succession on Reed and Tyfield.

Forcing Greg Taylor to leave the pitch when only a team-mate had helped him combat cramp temporarily left Town down to eight men – and Brabin, who was already missing 11 players through injury, suspension or cup-ties, was

clearly irate. "To play a large part of the game nine against 12 – sorry, 11 – was tough and I'm proud of the lads," he said. "All we want is a bit of consistency. We felt the decisions kept going against us."

A clash between these two clubs is never without incident, and

this was no exception. It started brightly, with Keane and Watkins going close for the Hatters while Reed should have doubled York's advantage when Matty Blinkhorn set him clear. Tyler saved that 24th-minute effort, then Laure Oyebarrio's spectacular overhead-kick.

After the break, the chances all

went the hosts' way – Tyler producing a brilliant double save in the 73rd minute to deny first Ashley Chambers, then Blinkhorn's follow-up with his feet. Jon Challinor, Scott Kerr, James Meredith and Hatters sub Curtis Osano – inadvertently getting in the way of a Pilkington clearance – all tested him further, but York could find no way past.

"The fans were fantastic," said Brabin of the 457 travelling contingent. "They've witnessed what's happened today and seen the way the boys have dug in."

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STAR MAN: Mark Tyler (Luton)
ATE: 3.365
ENTERTAINMENT: *****
REF RATING: Paul Tierney 5/10



KEY MOMENT: Jake Howells handles on the line

MATCH STATS

YORK v LUTON

12 SHOTS ON TARGET	1
5 SHOTS OFF TARGET	5
9 CORNERS	9
4 OFFSIDE	9
9 FOULS CONCEDED	5
1 YELLOW CARDS	3
0 RED CARDS	2

YORK: 4-3-3: Ingham 6; Challinor 6; Parnlow 7; Smith 7; Tyfield 8; O'Donoghue 62; Os, Oysterson 7; Potts 13; 16; Kerr 6; Alderson 7; Reed 7; Blinkhorn 8; Adebisi 6; Chambers 46; G. Subs not used: Dave Mills (captain).

LUTON: 4-4-2: Tyler 8; Adebisi 7; Kovacs 8; G. Pilkington 8; Taylor 4; Keane 5; Leavelle 7; Harry 6; Blackwell 58; 75; Watkins 6; Osano 82; 8; Howells 4; Cress 5; Woodley 57; 6; Subs not used: G. Donnelly, Kidd.